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ABSTRACT

The hypothesis that making judgments is the basis for workplace learning was examined by studying work in a range of occupations with a view to identifying and analyzing the main judgments involved in individuals' work performance. To test the hypothesis, six practicing professionals (three men and three women) were interviewed. Two of interviewees were public servants with division-level responsibilities. The occupations of the other four were as follows: psychiatrist; private school principal; nurse turned ambulance officer; and corporate consultant. During the interviews, the professionals were asked to reflect on the judgments they make in critical work situations. The interviews were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed in the context of theories regarding workplace learning and logic of action. It was concluded that growth in capacity to make judgments is evident in the following abilities and actions: (1) an ability to separate the stage of presentation of the initial need to make a judgment from the stage of the contiguous actualization of that judgment; (2) an ability to "read" the conative, emotive, and ethical considerations in the light of that separability; and (3) the decentering of the practitioner's sense of identity at one of these stages, but not in both of them. (Contains 34 references.) (MN)

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Making judgments as the basis for workplace learning: Preliminary research findings

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> 'Grant was not a "lawyer's lawyer". He would not want to be remembered for his technical abilities or craftsmanship in the law, although it has to be said that he was a most accomplished lawyer. His talents lay more in his use of masterful judgment and tactics in litigation. He always had an uncanny "feel" for a case.' (Obituary, *The Age* Nov 20 1998 p22)

INTRODUCTION: BEYOND TACIT KNOWLEDGE

When a lawyer demonstrates a 'feel' for a case, then, as in many similar situations, there seems to be a reliance on what has become known as 'tacit knowledge', arising from the recognition it has been given by Polanyi, and then by Schon, and then by many other writers concerned with the power of informal learning, arising in experiences. Underpinning these analyses has been the abiding influence of the later Wittgenstein, Ryle, and of course Dewey. In this paper, we want to take up the more detailed analysis of this sort of knowledge, but without resort to the temptation of the labelling of informal learning in some situations of ordinary experiences as 'tacit'. In attempting to de-mystify such knowledge, the danger is that ascription of 'tacitness' re-mystifies it. Clearly the use of 'tactics' and the reliance on the tacit are related, at least etymologically. In what follows, we want to preserve the centrality of the empirical activity that lies with, for example, a lawyer's 'use of masterful judgment', by enquiring of busy professionals what it is they find themselves doing, at work, in the midst of the 'hot action' (Beckett 1996). This we take to be significant in the light of the renewed interest in workplace learning, particularly in its informal manifestations (Garrick 1998; Boud & Garrick 1999; Hager & Beckett 1998).

One of the clear findings of this work is that an unusually large number of variables influence workplace learning (Hager 1997b). Such variables include:

- the workplace environment/culture
- authentic learning experiences
- quality of learning materials
- role of language and literacy
- company/business size

This creates the problem of 'far too many variables' for researchers wanting to investigate workplace learning. What is needed is some manageable way of conceptualising workplace learning that draws attention to the main features of the phenomenon, while at the same time being sensitive to the potential contributions of the many variables that have been shown to influence workplace learning. Learning beyond the simple recognition of tacit knowledge requires, we believe, close attention to the presentation of the learning in the very experiences of the work.

THE RESEARCH PROJECT

In looking to the main features of the phenomenon of workplace learning, this research project concentrates on a central activity of people learning in the workplace, namely making judgments. Our hypothesis (below) is that making better judgments represents a paradigmatic aim of workplace learning, and that therefore growth in such learning is represented by a growing capacity to make appropriate judgments in the changing, and often unique, circumstances that occur in many workplaces.

Of course, the extent to which workers make judgments during the course of their work depends, amongst other things, on the way that the work is structured and organised. An assembly line, e.g., is organised so that workers will exercise minimal judgment, therefore there will be little or no workplace learning. The much discussed 'learning organisation' maximises the exercise of judgment, and, hence, learning. Most jobs fall somewhere between these two extremes. This research project argues further that by theorising workplace learning in terms of what people actually do (make judgments), we can then take account of the effects of the many variables that influence workplace learning via their influence on such judgments. It turns out that the many variables that influence workplace learning are just the kinds of factors that are taken into account when judgments are made.

The proposal, then, is to study the performance of work in a range of occupations with a view to identifying and analysing the main judgments involved in individuals' work performance. What is a judgment? For the purposes of this research, we can say that judgment involves deciding what to believe or do taking into account a variety of relevant factors and then acting accordingly. More generally and technically, according to Lipman "[t]o judge is to judge relationships, either by discovering relationships or inventing them." (Lipman 1991, p. 16)

The research methods used to study work performances could include:

- observations of work performance
- interviews with workers about the judgments they make in critical work situations
- asking workers to account for judgments that others make in critical work situations
- examination of holistic competency-based assessment strategies that are in current use in some occupations to determine the nature and extent of judgment in these assessment situations

For this paper, only the second of these methods - interviews with practising professionals (5 in Sydney; 5 in Melbourne) - will be utilised. These interviews are each of one hour and are taped, transcribed, returned for 'trustworthiness' revision, and will eventually be coded and gridded. For the present stage of this project, we have selected only some of the details from the first three interviews in both Sydney and Melbourne (6 of the total of 10). Women and men are equally represented in the six interviews, and the professional work covers: a psychiatrist, a private school principal, a nurse-turned-ambulance officer, a corporate consultant with education/training expertise, and two public servants with divisional-level responsibilities. We expect to have a more developed version of this paper for the UK VET Conference at Bolton in mid-1999.

Ethnomethodological research needs to be supplemented by strategies which 'get beneath the surface' of experience, rather than merely report it. Thus, reflective interviews, loosely shaped by common questions, which had not been revealed beforehand, with practitioners on their work performance, can be methodologically informed by Ferry & Ross-Gordon's 'think aloud' approach (1998). At a more profound level, such interviews draw upon the development of a Dreyfus/Benner interpretive phenomenology, but we are mindful of the debate over the resort to phenomenological analysis in research activity (see Crotty 1996). The ontological implications of a Husserlian 'thing-in-itself' would raise for us some substantial philosophical objections (but not in this paper: basically we, like Carr 1998, take the traditionally ontologically objectivist view that there is a mind-independent reality).

Project aims and outcomes

The primary aim of the research is to establish the usefulness or otherwise of the major hypothesis that workplace learning is primarily a growing capacity to make appropriate judgments in the particular circumstances that occur in one's workplace.

Subsidiary, and subsequent, aims of the research are to identify major factors that shaped the judgments and to study the range of propositions offered in explanation and/or justification of judgments. These propositions will be analysed in the light of Dewey's seven kinds of propositions (discussed later).

The final aim of the project is to develop a model of workplace learning centred on judgments. The main outcomes will bethe testing of the major hypothesis in a diverse range of occupations, identification of the types and bases of major judgments deployed in the occupations studied and the development of model of workplace learning based on judgment. This will likely lead to further research to refine and test the applicability of the model. The research questions are:

- How well does a hypothesis of workplace learning via judgment account for observed performance in a variety of workplaces?
- How well does a hypothesis of workplace learning via judgments account for the testimony and understanding of workers of their own and others' performance in a variety of workplaces?
- How well does a modified Deweyan theory of propositions account for the propositions that workers employ in explaining and/or justifying their workplace judgments?
- What model of workplace learning best accounts for the above findings?

Workplace learning and a logic of action

The beginnings of a model of workplace learning via judgments have been suggested in previous work (Hager 1996a and 1997a). This model possibly can be extended by ideas from Dewey's hitherto neglected logic (Burke 1994) and its account of judgments. Traditionally, logic was concerned centrally with universal propositions, which were also the mark of the highest forms of knowledge. In this scheme, judgments were also propositions. On this approach, workplace learning is of little interest, since, at best, its particularities are but distantly connected to the ideal of universal knowledge. Thus the problem becomes one of accounting for how practice is connected to theory. Notoriously theory/practice accounts of workplace judgments have repeatedly failed (Hager 1996b).

Dewey's logic, however, is a logic of action, which repudiates the theory/practice dichotomy (and cognate dichotomies such as discursive vs practical). It also distinguishes propositions from judgments. With the development of artificial intelligence, robotics, etc. the field of logic is finally turning its attention to the logic of action and Dewey's ideas are starting to receive serious scholarly attention (Burke 1994). In a logic of action, vocational (or professional) knowledge is no longer placed at the periphery of knowledge. Such a logic does not invert the order of traditional logic and privilege the particular over the universal and the practical over the discursive. Rather it incorporates all of these and rejects as false dichotomies theory/practice, universal/particular, discursive/practical, etc. (Hickman 1990).

A model of workplace learning via judgments that is proposed to be developed and tested in this research project builds on the work of Lipman (1991) and Nonaka & Takeuchi (1995) as well as that of Dewey. As against traditional logic's reliance on the universal/particular dichotomy, thereby shaping what counts as 'real' knowledge, this model will feature a much more sophisticated account of the kinds of propositions that are relevant to knowledge. Dewey's logic identifies seven sorts of propositions, only one of which is particular and two of which are universal. However, three of these are what Dewey calls "specific" and four are "general". All of the types of Deweyan propositions are potentially relevant to workplace judgments, and, hence, may become part of the model.

Dewey's seven kinds of propositions (Burke 1994, pp. 178-9) are:

1. A particular proposition attributes a quality to some ostensible thing in a given situation. ("That is twinkling." "Its position is now abcxyz.")

2. A singular proposition classifies something in a given situation as being of a certain kind. ("That is a planet." "It is now in retrograde motion.")

3. A contingent-conditional proposition states a conditional link among singular things of various kinds in a given situation. ("If that moves, it is a planet." "If that comet does not go away, these crops will wither.")

4. A generic proposition states that a relationship holds among kinds instantiated in a given situation. ("All planets are stars." "Comets are ominous." "Most stars are fixed.")

5. A contingent-disjunctive proposition differentiates a kind into a disjunction of subkinds, with an eye toward developing some working taxonomy of kinds in a given situation. ("Stars either wander or are fixed.")

6. A universal-hypothetical proposition states a relationship in principle among modes of being. ("All celestial motion is perfectly circular.")

7. A universal-disjunctive proposition exhaustively partitions a mode into constituent modes, but as a matter of principle. ("All changes are of four sorts: locomotive, quantitative, qualitative, or substantial.")

Workplace learning as phenomenal experience

Experiences of working life are manifest in daily practice and decisions caught up in and expressed by what can be called 'hot action' (Beckett 1996). These experiences are typically judgmental in that a series of actions issue from deliberations over 'what to do next', when faced with the usual routines and contingencies across the working day. If these actions are 'right' (efficacious, appropriate and so on) it is perhaps mainly because they achieve what was contextually suited. There is in all of this what psychologists in VET are now exploring as 'situated cognition' (McLellan 1996, Billett 1995), but the pilot project will also pick up the increasing interest in the social and affective aspects of these judgments (Karpin 1995, Mumford 1993, Bowman and Jarrett 1996), especially the idea of 'flow' (Csikszentmihalyi 1992; Goleman 1996), and of the role of 'attention' in human learning (Winch 1998)

In these judgments, individuals 'attend' to their total perceptions of their workplace: cognitive (reason-based), affective (feelings, wants) and social (group and team allegiances) dimensions of these perceptions are only artificially separable. We want to maintain the integrated, organic nature of these perceptions, so that their (literal) 'integrity' is the focus of the empirical investigation of practical judgments. To that end, phenomenological analysis - the imputation of meaningfulness in experience - will be an essential part of the methodology.

Moreover, there is empirical evidence of this phenomenologically-significant organic, or integrated workplace learning, in more holistic notions of competence (Hager and Beckett 1995), of training (Sefton et al. 1994, 1995), of professional development (Beckett 1998b, 1998c), of assessment (Hager 1997b) and of training packages (Down 1998).

FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

Clearly, a handful of interviews will not provide any generalisable data, but that is not the point of the project. Practitioners' reflective reports of their decision-making may help identify emphases in the making of workplace judgments which can be mapped across Deweyan structures, and some conclusions drawn about their the adequacy of those structures. At the very least they may help us identify their deficiencies.

Following Dewey's idea that propositions of various kinds underpin and contribute to judgments without thereby constituting them, we can identify a range of such propositions relating to scenarios which each interviewee was invited to relate. Here is what was related by the corporate consultant with expertise in education and training can be mapped across Dewey's propositional structure:

D1 "This training system is very complex" (Scenario 1), "This situation is delicate" (Scenario 2).

D2 "These staff may be in danger of being made redundant" (Scenario 1), "These training materials are inappropriate for this organisation" (Scenario 2), "My business plan is still on track" (Scenario 3).

D3 "If this training system is implemented, business outcomes should be enhanced" (Scenario 1), "If I am too precipitate in pointing to the unsuitability of the training materials, I risk alienating senior staff" (Scenario 2), "If I take this consultancy, I risk compromising my educational principles" (Scenario 3).

D4 "All basic training should match up with work roles" (Scenario 1), "Most staff are disaffected with the present training arrangements" (Scenario 2), "All consultancies should fit in with my philosophy" (Scenario 3).

D5 "Training systems either cater for specific work roles and corporate outcomes, or they are of very doubtful value" (Scenario 1), "Consultancies should either fit in with my philosophy or be avoided" (Scenario 3).

D6 "Not all training needs are well served by off-the-shelf training materials" (Scenario 2),

D7 "Training needs should be met by a mix of internal and external provision" (Scenario 1).

However, while these propositions and others like them (which we can group as broadly 'cognitive') no doubt contributed to the judgments, there were also other factors that were not wholly propositional. These are conative ('of the will'), emotive and ethical factors. The rest of this paper will discuss these, and then only under one (central) aspect: to what extent and in what ways do interviewees adduce these (non-propositional) factors to their growth in capacity to make judgments?

Taking the nurse-turned-ambulance officer as an example, we find in this scenario below a whole series of 'decisions' (i.e. judgments) which are saturated with conative, emotive and ethical considerations. Moreover, in this first paragraph, her own feelings are clearly not uppermost in her reporting of the scenario - her ambulance-officer partner, and the family are significant here. Later on, when she is asked about that, she is able to articulate three-stage growth in how her non-propositional experiences have related to her judgments.

> ...And the little baby certainly wasn't breathing. The first decision is - do you start resuscitation or not? And there's a whole set of rules that we have about when you do and when you don't start resuscitation. So I made the decision to start...My partner was more frazzled by the situation than I was. He and I had an interesting relationship at that time because he was in a superior position, theoretically, but in practice and knowledge I was ahead of him. So that

made it awkward, and he knew that. He felt very uncomfortable about it, and I did too - because of the way he treated me because of that. So the relationship was on the face of it harmonious, but it had some undercurrents that made things difficult. And this resuscitation brought those out because I'm used to resuscitating children, and so I just went into that role. And he wasn't, and he didn't. So we resuscitated the little baby, and we actually got an output, which means that we got some heart rhythm back - which in these circumstances was very unusual and quite unexpected - well not unexpected but unusual. And so another crew arrived, which was the intensive care crew, and so they helped us to continue to resuscitate. Eventually we had to stop.

So I suppose decisions that I made were things like- which equipment to use and when; how to help my partner through it, because he obviously wasn't coping very well with it. He had little kiddies the same age, so apart from the conflict he and I had, I could see it was hard for him anyway. Then dealing with the family obviously was difficult. It is very difficult in the ambulance world because they actively encourage the family to stay around for resuscitation, whereas in nursing they are not as progressive in that way. So it is very difficult doing resuscitation with the family watching, than it was in a hospital where you put them out the door and when it's all over you bring them in again. So during the resuscitation, I had to decide when to speak to them - and when you know, when you're pretty sure that you're not going to get the little baby back - you give them a warning before you stop. And so you have to decide when to do that and how to phrase it. And there's a decision that we've made collectively as a group of officers about whether to stop the resuscitation or whether to keep it going or not.

CH - You do that collectively?

TT - Yes. Once it's all finished, you talk to the family about it, and give them some time with the baby. And there's a whole set of protocols about where you take the baby's body and call the police.

CH - So the police arrive while you're there?

TT - Yes they did, and that's routine.....

...it's difficult dealing with the death of children obviously. But I've developed some techniques for dealing with that.

CH - How have you done that?

TT - Through exposure I suppose and exploring how my feelings play a part, particularly in my decisions, because after I've been in a situation where I make judgments about things, or just my everyday job - this is from quite a few years ago I started doing this. Looking at what role my emotions played in it, and I found that the more dissatisfied with how I performed, I was, the more my emotions had played a less than constructive part in the job. So I don't believe you can keep your emotions right out of it or have your emotions controlling the situation. And I think you need to have a balance somewhere in between, and so I'm getting to the point - and I'm practising it - I don't say I do it that well - actually I like to think I do it pretty well. I find it easy to do a job now and keep my emotions right out of it, and think about it later on. And I think that's a step up for me from having my emotions play a part and affect my judgments. And that's a step up from not having your emotions in there at all.

So now I'm getting to the point where I like to be able to feel my emotions at the time, and still have them not impact upon the appropriate judgments and the decisions that I make - and that's complex.

Notice that this is a long way from support for anything like tacit knowledge (inarticulate, ineffable arcana) in judgment, but it does acknowledge a rich array of conative, ethical and emotional factors in the 'hot action' of the scenario outlined.

If the action is cooler (where there more time for reflection), does tacit knowledge gain a toehold? In the following scenario, it initially appears - as instinct - but then it is substantially qualified by growth in experience, with conative and emotive ('feelings') factors acknowledged but corralled. The interviewee is principal of a large private school.

> DB - ...Where you get resistance to decisions - perhaps with staffing implications - that people wouldn't be comfortable with, or parents not comfortable with, and people land on your doorstep with a gripe, what do you bring to the resolution of these situations?
>
> NH - I bring to it an instinct - an instinctive feel for how it fits within our culture and how it fits within our future. Now of course I don't think that I'm conceited because I actually argue with myself all the time but obviously I think my instinct is right. ...
>
> DB - And you'd have a series of these decisions across several days or across the working year, which could be routine for you, because they are utterly consistent with the way in which you read the situation, or read the culture.
>
> NH - Yes.
>
> DB - Where the organisation has faced external constraints such as the planning difficulties I read about with your extensions and development - that kind of thing - when you have to make judgments of an overtly political nature involving the media, the local press, and so on, what do you bring to those sorts of judgments?
>
> NH - Well you already know what your own plan is in terms of you seek advice what you're prepared to do. What is right to do - what is ethical and appropriate. And you may have noticed if you are local that I made a decision very early on that I wasn't going to talk to the press. So that was the end of it. But it has been in the press with the comment that the principal hasn't returned a call or wasn't available. That's fine.... You have to know what you're doing for your own organisation is right in the first place. You have to be very sure about that.....
>
> DB - .... I wanted to build on the idea of what I take to be reliance on intuition.
>
> NH - Right. Huge. Huge.
>
> DB - So when I say, and you say, 'the reading of the culture', a lot of that is intuitionistic?
>
> NH - And a build up of that experience. If you'd interviewed me say six or seven years ago - different, different totally.
>
> DB - But can we formalise that more in knowledge-based terms so that you can say - 'Look I'm the principal and I've got this depth of experience: It's different from when I started the job. I'm able to say just by rule of thumb. I can exercise judgments that I know are going to be more or less effective'.

NH - Oh yes.

DB - So even against the odds you might pull something off with the council, staff, or people within the community because you backed a hunch that you could really formalise this knowledge.

NH - Oh. I do that quite a bit and I'm always pleased when it's something that is my idea, that a lot of people didn't want at the time. We just sort of say OK well we'll try it and the people find they actually do like it. However we also try and work in a team way on a whole variety of decisions but another thing I'd say, I can't remember in my ten years working with the school council (and their culture has changed too and some of that would be my influence...), I can't remember anything that I've asked for that doesn't happen. ...

DB - Now, based on that, I'm picking up the feeling that it's important for you that a challenging judgment is something that shouldn't really arise in an ad hoc or unforeseen fashion. It's very important to have it thought through, deliberated upon, well-resourced, justified, and so on. So I'm wonder' 'g if in the daily course of your work there is very much reliance on the emotions, feelings.

NH - What sorts of feelings?

DB - Trusting them.

NH - When it comes to trusting them?

DB - Yes, instinct is fine, but this sort of warmer, fuzzier idea of feelings.

NH - No I don't think so - not if it's got to be cool objective thinking..... I think I'm being utterly objective when I can disassociate myself from feelings, friendships, and other alliances and say look at the big picture, look at this, look at that. So no I don't think so.

DB - So if somebody walked in to see you and they had a particular problem and they dissolved into a flood of tears - would you be less likely to modify the point of view that you had?

NH - I don't know. I'd - depending on who it was - I'd put my arm around them and want to solve their personal problem first and then deal with the rest of it... Two other things, unrelated but maybe not, I love it when someone walks through my door and says 'I've done something terrible: I've got the most dreadful problem you can imagine', because I instinctively know it's going to be the most easy thing to solve of the lot.

But secondly, if someone - as will happen today - walks through my door for an interview - then when I'm choosing people for interview to come and work here, as you know from research, the CV goes out the window the minute they come through the door and instinct takes over but also a little bit of that is feelings. And even though they may not fit your criteria, they're some of the most critical judgments I ever make for the school - picking the right people....It's my principal job - getting the right people into this school.

What seems to be emerging is a distinction between the role of, and evidence adduced towards, making a judgment, in, first, an initial situation where the need to make a judgment is presented, and, second, a contiguous situation where the actual judgment is

made. Interviewees seem to be able to distinguish between a cluster of conative, emotive and ethical factors relevant to the framing of the initial situation (instinct comes in there, but so does propositional knowledge, presenting as past experiences), and a cluster of these factors relevant to the framing of the judgment itself.

In this third scenario, the action is midway between the heat of the emergency resuscitation, and the cool of the private school: the interviewee is a psychiatrist. She carefully separates the two situations (diagnosis and treatment, in this case) drawing on several conative, emotive and ethical factors, but packaging these adroitly as sociopolitical considerations, which actually determine the clinical response to the medical diagnosis.

> CH - When you need to make a decision, how do you decide what you're going to do? I have a few examples. Do you decide based on intuition - perhaps a feeling? Do you have an ethical response? Is it a cognitive principle? Or is it possibly a blend?
>
> LB - It's obviously a blend of all three....The first information I have is theoretical knowledge of the situation - of someone who has a psychotic illness - I know a lot about that. I know what is optimal, and I know what is necessary. Now what I actually do has to be based on an ethical system as well, and it has to be based on the legal implications and responsibility, in terms of the care. So there are many factors in this. But the major thing that directs what you do in this clinic - the clinic in which I work - is the facilities that we actually have for carrying out what is necessary. And so it's a blend of all those things - the practicality of it, the needs of the patient in the given situation. Now if you wish to speak optimally for the young man who was in withdrawal, the optimal situation would be for him to be placed in reasonably long-term care - and quickly, treated medically, withdrawn from his drugs, and then put into a program which would protect him to a degree from his capacity to use drugs further. So he couldn't in fact get them, and would be given long-term rehabilitation. Now none of these things exist at the moment. So these are the things that you have to weigh up, but what you end up with is a totally unsatisfied arrangement where he was allowed to go - allowed to leave, and then overdosed, shortly afterwards. ....
>
> CH - So you're saying that your judgments are curtailed by what's available.
>
> LB - What we can actually do, what positions we reach, are based on the practical availability of the services in the end.
>
> CH - When you're presented with one of these situations, do you find yourself trying to fit this particular instance into a familiar pattern, or sometimes do you find you are trying to establish a new pattern to meet the specific instance?
>
> LB - There's a familiarity in the cases that are presented to us. They're all very much the same in many ways due by the nature of the illness these people suffer. There is familiarity at that level. The differences occur in terms of the social milieu from which the people come. Because we are accepting the most handicapped people, from the poorest level of society, there is also familiarity of the patterns because these people are all on welfare. They're all unable to work. The vast majority of them have got into the hands of people involved in drug use. So all these situations are becoming familiar and have become quite familiar over the last five years. But this is quite different to say ten years ago.

CH - Just thinking of the young man - the way you described how you coped with his situation. Do you think that was a spontaneous response? The way you described it, it was - it was very unfamiliar and you really had to come up with some 'out of left field' response.

LB - Yes, that's unusual because the drug services have recently been cut back from that area. Once upon a time there used to be services for acute withdrawal patients - to help people with drug addiction. And now they don't exist. They only exist if people are capable of waiting, and capable of fulfilling all these conditions drug and alcohol services put down. Which in fact keep the people away from care because they can't fulfil the requirements. They can't wait till 5 o'clock and ring up every day to check whether there is a place or a bed to use for them in a particular institution. They don't have the money. They don't have the telephone. They don't have the capacity to do it.....

CH - When you decided to give him those drugs, and you were thinking about it - did you find yourself thinking - if I do this, this might happen. Or if I do this, this will. Is there a certain scenario that's going on in your head?

LB - A definite scenario because we knew he came in specifically to get benz. We knew that if we didn't give the benz, he'd be in worse withdrawal. We knew that it was illegal in crisis to prescribe the amount of benz that he was in fact taking. So we couldn't even prescribe a sufficient dose to cover his withdrawal. So we knew that by giving him a dose supply he'd take the lot at once, and probably go out and go to another doctor and get more, or steal them, or buy them in the street. We knew that would happen and we weren't surprised when we heard he had a major drug overdose shortly after.

[pause]

There is spontaneity in sofar as you've seen most situations before and you're familiar with them and you know what the procedures are and the way to approach. Given unusual scenarios, like the situation with this drug victim, there's not much that we actually spontaneously do because we always discuss it. So that, for example, I had long discussions with another care worker at the time the young man presented. So it's very rarely that we do anything without considerable talk. So it's not spontaneous. It's usually mutually decided and agreed upon, and if there's any doubt about the ethical nature of the problem, or you're really concerned, you go to a more senior consultant, and discuss the situation before you actually act..... There's not a lot of responding to the person and the problem. In fact that's what you have to make a lot of distance from. You really have to take into account lots of factors. The more factors you know, the more you take into account.

CH - So you don't believe that you act spontaneously - it's very much a calculated thought, based on your experience, most of the time.

LB - Yes. With people who are working in a field - very specialised fields for a very long period time. As I've had 35 years of experience, there's not a lot that's new. It's just variation and many of the responses that I would give now are thoroughly learned responses which have become a part of me. So that I don't have to think the way someone who's greeting the situation for the first time has to think. If you watch people coming into this and observing what we're doing, they're quite nonplussed. They're quite confused, disordered, distressed by it all because they tend to be more reactive to the patient who is often in extreme distress. But once you've been doing it for a long time you tend to distance yourself from that. You don't get involved at the distress level. So you're not reacting.

Conclusion

At this early stage, perhaps we can claim that growth in capacity to make judgments is evident in (a) an ability to separate the stage of the presentation of the initial need to make a judgment, from the stage of the contiguous actualisation of that judgment; (b) an ability to 'read' the conative, emotive and ethical considerations in the light of that separability (such considerations will be factored in differently for each stage); (c) the de-centring of the practitioner's sense of identity at one of these stages, but not in both of them.

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